Inland Waterways project in Kerala

910. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Kerala Government informed the Central Government that the condition laid down for giving sanction to Inland Waterways projects are quite impractical;

(b) if so, whether Government have considered the point raised by the State Government;

(c) whether Government have taken any decision on that basis; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) As advised by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, immediate steps are being taken for early completion of the public hearing. There after environmental clearance of the project would be considered by that Ministry.

Condition of National Highways

911. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleasd to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that pitiable condition of National Highways has been adversely affecting the production and growth of automobile industry in general and car industry in particular; and

(b) if so, what are the steps Government propose to improve upon the situation?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) The traffic on National Highways is increasing constantly, but the National Highways are being kept in traffic worthy conditions within available resources. The Government is also encouraging the development of National Highways on Build, Operate and Transfer basis with private sector funds.

Non-Application of Provident Fund Act to Seamen

912. PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the seamen have been excluded from the Provident Fund Act of 1952 for providing them provident fund and gratuity benefits, if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether there is a proposal before Government to amend the Provident Fund Act, 1952 to include in it the sea farers and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whetehr it is a fact that the National Union of Sea-farers of India has pioneered the concept of self-funding union and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir. Since seamen are not continuously and regularly engaged on board a ship or ships and work intermittently on voyage to voyage basis for each employment, seamen were excluded from the Provident Fund Act of 1952. However, later they were covered by Seamen's Provident Fund Act, 1966.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Govt. are not aware of such a concept developed by the Union.

Self-financing and Self-sustainable Ports

913. PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that increase corporatisation of development and management of ports is the need of the hour;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal before Government to make the ports self-financing and self-sustainable on commercial principles; and

(c) if so, what economic benefits will it accrue?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) The 11 Major Ports in the country are already self-financing and self-sustaining as they are not provided with any